

Allowed Claims:

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-readable storage medium having computer-executable modules stored thereon, the modules respectively configuring a computer to perform acts comprising:

configuring a file locator, ~~configured~~ to locate an executable image on a computer media;

configuring a file-format recognizer, ~~configured~~ to recognize [[the]] a file format of the executable image from amongst a database of multiple file format definitions, wherein the database is extensible so that additional file format definitions may be added to the database of multiple file format definitions;

configuring a memory-mapper, ~~configured~~ to open the executable image from the computer media and read it into a computer memory;

configuring an importer, ~~configured~~ to find a list of executable image names to load;

configuring an exporter, ~~configured~~ to build a representation of program modules that an executable image exports;

configuring a binder, ~~configured~~ to link multiple executable images together, such images being those of the list of executable image names.

2. (CANCELED)

3. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer-readable storage_medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the importer is further configured to direct the loading of multiple executable images of the list of executable image names to load

4. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the file-format recognizer is further configured to select one or more of a group of available pluggable sub-loaders ~~[[is]]~~ capable of loading the recognized file format of the executable image.

5. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A loader comprising a computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 1.

6. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) An operating system comprising a computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 1.

7. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer comprising a computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 1.

8. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-readable storage medium having computer-executable modules stored thereon, the modules respectively configuring a computer to perform acts comprising:

configuring a searcher, ~~configured~~ to search a computer media for an executable image for loading;

configuring a format[[,]] recognizer ~~configured~~ to recognize [[the]] a format of the executable image;

configuring a memory-mapper, ~~configured~~ to load and map the executable image into memory based upon the format of the executable image;

configuring a sub-loader, ~~configured~~ to examine a data structure of the executable image to determine whether to load additional images;

configuring a database of multiple executable-image formats which is the basis for which the format recognizer recognizes the format of the executable image and for which the memory-mapper varies how it loads and maps the executable image into memory, wherein the database is extensible so that additional executable-image formats may be recognized by the format recognizer and loaded and mapped by the memory-mapper.

9. (CANCELED)

10. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 8, wherein one or more modules of the medium are configured to be replaced with a replacement module without recompilation of one or more modules.

11. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 8, wherein the memory-mapper is further configured to convert the executable image before mapping it into the memory.

12. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 8, wherein the memory-mapper is further configured to decrypt the executable image before mapping it into the memory.

13. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A loader comprising a computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 8.

14. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) An operating system comprising a computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 8.

15. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer comprising a computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 8.

16-23. (CANCELED)

24. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer implemented method facilitating loading of one or more executable images of varying formats, the method comprising:

locating an executable image on a computer-readable storage media;

investigating information related to the executable image, thereby identifying the format of the executable image, wherein:

- during the investigating, accessing an extensible database of executable-image formats; and
- the investigating accesses a header of the executable image in order to identify the format;
- initiating an extensible loader associated with the identified format, wherein the extensible loader:
 - is pointed to by an entry; and
 - comprises a plurality of modules that are selectively combined to accommodate executable image formats not supported by the native operating system, each module including at least one component designed for a specific executable image format;
- loading the executable image into a computer memory using the extensible loader, wherein the loading comprises:
 - calling an entry point located in loaded program libraries in order to load the executable image;
 - creating a new process based on the entry point;
 - creating necessary sections within the loaded program libraries for the executable image;
 - creating an initial thread for the executable image; and

handing over control from the extensible loader to the initial thread in order to execute the executable image.

25. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer-readable storage medium storing instructions that, when executed, configure a computer to perform the method of claim 24.

26. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer comprising a processor configured to perform the method of claim 24.